WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1   1.   A method of associating an electronic signature with an
2   electronic record in a computer system, the method comprising:
3   allowing a user to define an event that, upon occurrence, generates an
4   electronic record that requires an electronic signature;
5   allowing a user to define the fields stored in the electronic record;
6   allowing a user to generate a map that maps data from underlying
7   database tables to at least some of the fields defined for the electronic record;
8   allowing a user to define a layout for displaying data in the electronic
9   record on a computer display when an electronic signature for the data record is
10   collected;
11   allowing a user to identify a signatory approver for the electronic record;
12   in response to the occurrence of the event, generating the electronic
13   record and displaying the electronic record to the signatory approver according to the
14   defined layout;
15   receiving an electronic signature from the signatory approver; and
16   associating the electronic signature with the electronic record.

1   2.   The method of claim 1 further comprising verifying the
2   electronic signature prior to associating the electronic signature with the electronic
3   record.

1   3.   The method of claim 2 wherein the step of associating the
2   electronic signature with the data record is performed in response to a positive
3   verification of the electronic signature.

1   4.   The method of claim 1 wherein the electronic signature
2   comprises a user id and a password.

1   5.   The method of claim 1 further comprising verifying the
2   electronic signature and storing the electronic record in a common repository of
3   electronic records that are generated from multiple data sources.

1   6.   The method of claim 5 wherein the electronic record comprises
2   unstructured data in a character large object (CLOB) format.

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1   7. The method of claim 6 wherein the common repository is a

2 database and wherein the unstructured data is a well-formed XML document stored

3 within a column of a table stored in the database.

1   8. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of, if

2 execution of the rule results in a determination that an electronic signature is required,

3 displaying data from the electronic record on a computer display.

1   9. A computer system that manages electronic records stored in a

2 database, the computer system comprising:

3   a processor;

4   a database; and

5   a computer-readable memory coupled to the processor, the computer-

6 readable memory configured to store a computer program;

7   wherein the processor is operative with the computer program to:

8   (i) allow a user to define an event that, upon occurrence, generates

9 an electronic record that requires an electronic signature;

10   (ii) allow a user to define the fields stored in the electronic record;

11   (iii) allow a user to generate a map that maps data from underlying

12 database tables to at least some of the fields defined for the electronic record;

13   (iv) allow a user to define a layout for displaying data in the

14 electronic record on a computer display when an electronic signature for the

15 data record is collected;

16   (v) allow a user to identify a signatory approver for the electronic

17 record;

18   (vi) generate the electronic record and displaying the electronic

19 record to the signatory approver according to the defined layout in response to

20 the occurrence of the event;

21   (vii) receive an electronic signature from the signatory approver; and

22   (viii) associate the electronic signature with the electronic record.

1   10. The computer system of claim 9 wherein processor is further

2 operative to verify the electronic signature.

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1   11. The computer system of claim 10 wherein processor is operative

2 to associate the electronic signature with the data record in response to a positive

3 verification of the electronic signature.

1   12. The computer system of claim 9 wherein the electronic signature

2 comprises a user id and a password.

1   13. The computer system of claim 12 wherein the processor is

2 further operative to verify the electronic signature and store the electronic record in a

3 common repository of electronic records that are generated from multiple data sources.

1   14. The computer system of claim 13 wherein the electronic record

2 comprises unstructured data in a character large object (CLOB) format.

1   15. The computer system of claim 14 wherein the common

2 repository is a database and wherein the unstructured data is a well-formed XML

3 document stored within a column of a table stored in the database.

1   16. The computer system of claim 9 wherein the processor is further

2 operative to display data from the electronic record on a computer display if execution

3 of the rule results in a determination that an electronic signature is required.

1   17. A computer program stored on a computer-readable storage

2 medium for managing electronic records stored in a database, the computer program

3 comprising:

4   code for allowing a user to define an event that, upon occurrence,

5 generates an electronic record that requires an electronic signature;

6   code for allowing a user to define the fields stored in the electronic

7 record;

8   code for allowing a user to generate a map that maps data from

9 underlying database tables to at least some of the fields defined for the electronic

10 record;

11   code for allowing a user to define a layout for displaying data in the

12 electronic record on a computer display when an electronic signature for the data record

13 is collected;

14   code for allowing a user to identify a signatory approver for the

15   electronic record;

16   code for, in response to the occurrence of the event, generating the

17   electronic record and displaying the electronic record to the signatory approver

18   according to the defined layout;

19   code for receiving an electronic signature from the signatory approver;

20   and

21   code for associating the electronic signature with the electronic record.

1   18.   The computer program of claim 17 further comprising code for

2   verifying the electronic signature.

1   19.   The computer program of claim 18 wherein the electronic

2   signature comprises a user id and a password.

1   20.   The computer program of claim 18 further comprising code for

2   storing the electronic record in a common repository of electronic records that are

3   generated from multiple data sources.

1   21.   The computer program of claim 20 wherein the electronic record

2   comprises unstructured data in a character large object (CLOB) format.

1   22.   The computer program of claim 21 wherein the common

2   repository is a database and wherein the unstructured data is a well-formed XML

3   document stored within a column of a table stored in the database.

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